

Final Reflection

My 10 day placement in the emergency departments has been one of the most intense and eye-opening experiences of my nursing education. Throughout my experience, I have been exposed to fast paced, unpredictable environments where critical thinking, teamwork, and quick decision-making were crucial aspects of working in the emergency department. This experience has deepened my understanding of emergency care and my role as a future nurse in many ways.

One thing I found important to understanding the role of nurses and applying our nursing education was the exposure of a diverse patient population. I was able to witness and participate in care of patients experiencing finger amputations, cardiac arrests, hypoglycemic episodes, etc. Because of these experiences, I was able to coincide my knowledge of each but also learn the different protocols that went into each patient. For example, a patient had come into the ED with low blood sugar of 46 exhibiting symptoms of coldness, diaphoresis, and lethargy. Because of this we were able to initiate protocols of warming her with multiple blankets and what they called a “bear hugger”. This was something I had never seen done but I understood as to why it was required. We constantly kept checking her temperature and blood sugar as we encouraged her to eat complex carbohydrates. This experience taught me the importance of specific protocols needed for these types of patients.

In addition, I was able to gain confidence in my clinical skills such as initiating IV’s, administering medications, drawing blood, and participating in cardiac arrests. From the beginning of my preceptorship, I second-guessed myself constantly, worried that I would make a mistake or slow down the process of others but what helped me the most was having a supportive preceptor and the nurses around who supported me and allowed me to slowly immerse myself and show me what I needed to do rather than throwing me into new situations. Over time, I found that with constant practice and having my preceptor guide me with encouragement I was able to gain my confidence and trust my instincts. Though I have gained confidence, I will say it is something I can always improve on especially when I feel unsure about things. In addition, something specific I can improve on is giving SBAR. Though I was able to give reports to different floor nurses I found myself nervous in giving reports due to feeling like I wasn’t giving all pertinent information needed. Something I learned while being in the emergency department is that most of the time the nurses do focused assessments and information pertinent to the diagnosis is relevant to give while in report rather than giving unnecessary information.

During my time in the emergency department, one of the things that initially surprised me was how emotionally detached some of the nurses seemed. At first, I misunderstood it, I thought they were somewhat cold or lacked compassion but as the days went on, I started to see it differently. What I once saw as “numbness” was actually a form of resilience. This behavior was how the nurses stayed grounded in an environment that constantly demanded emotional strength, quick thinking, and difficult decisions. One day a patient had come in demanding attention and became verbally aggressive with the nurses trying to provide care. I was a bit surprised at how the nurses reacted, they did not react emotionally. They were able to set boundaries, explained

the situation and stand their ground. They took control of the situation, watching that; I realized that compassion in the ED does not always look like softness but instead firmness. At the same time, I noticed that when a patient needed emotional comfort and support, those same nurses knew exactly when to lean, sit down and offer their presence. Ultimately, the nurses had not lost their empathy, they just learned when and how to use it. This experience taught me the importance of developing emotional boundaries and assertiveness in my own practice, as I have a hard time of saying no and standing my ground. I learned that you can still be compassionate without being a pushover and this balance is something I intend to develop as I continue my journey in becoming a new nurse

Overall, I consider myself very lucky to have been placed in the emergency department with an exceptional preceptor as she pushed me to step out of my comfort zone and participate in critical situations. Because of this, I now feel more comfortable in critical situations and providing care to those whose situation requires constant monitoring. Because of these experiences, I was also able to apply my learning and further my understanding of different disease processes and learn the initiation of long term/short term care.